

R_x Folic Acid: Reducing the Risk of Neural Tube Defects

General Recommendation:

- A daily dose of 400 micrograms (0.4 mg) of synthetic folic acid.
- This amount is available through a multivitamin and a diet of foods containing folic acid.

History of Neural Tube Defects (NTDs) Recommendation:

- A higher *prescription dose of 4000 micrograms* (4.0 mg) beginning one to three months before pregnancy and in the first trimester of pregnancy, reduces the risk of having another affected pregnancy by up to 75 percent.
- Even with a prenatal vitamin and a diet of foods containing folic acid, women at risk for NTD recurrence need a prescription for folic acid.

Ask your patients if they are taking folic acid and prescribe it when necessary. Women are at greater risk for recurrence if they have:

- a child with an NTD
- an NTD themselves
- lost an NTD-affected pregnancy

If a woman at risk for recurrence is planning a pregnancy, she needs a folic acid prescription. Help your patients plan ahead!

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Recommendations for the use of folic acid to reduce the number of cases of spina bifida and other neural tube defects. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Vol. 41, No. RR-14, September 11, 1992.

Institute of Medicine. Dietary Reference Intake for Thiamin, Riboflavin, Niacin, Vitamin B6, Folate, Vitamin B12, Pantothenic Acid, Biotin, and Choline. Washington, DC. National Academy Press, 1998.

R_x Folic Acid to Prevent NTDs: Information to Share with Your Patients

Folic acid does not guarantee a healthy pregnancy but it helps reduce the risk of birth defects, like spina bifida and anencephaly.

All women of childbearing age need to take folic acid every day, even while not planning to become pregnant. Sources of folic acid include:

- Multivitamins
- Foods that contain folic acid:
 - orange juice,
 - leafy green vegetables, or
 - fortified grains and cereals.

Some women may need a prescription for folic acid because they are at risk for another affected pregnancy or recurrence. These women need ten times as much folic acid, 4000 micrograms (mcg) folic acid by prescription for 1 to 3 months *before becoming pregnant* and during the first few months of pregnancy. This amount is also written as 4.0 milligrams (mg).

For more information, please contact:

Spina Bifida Association of America
www.sbaa.org
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1-888-MODIMES



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